United Nations S/2015/641

Security Council

Distr.: General
18 August 2015

Original: English

Letter dated 17 August 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter from the representative of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces dated 17 August 2015 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Peter **Wilson**

15-13968 (E) 200815

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 17 August 2015 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces and the Syrian people, I write to urge you to call for an emergency session of the Security Council to address the massacre of innocent civilians in Syria over the weekend by aerial raids conducted by the Syrian regime.

What happened this weekend is unconscionable. Assad regime warplanes, backed by occupying Iranian militias, launched a series of ongoing air strikes, systematically shelling cities and towns, including Douma, Zabadani, and Idlib and their surrounding areas. The strikes were not random; the aircraft missiles were deliberately dropped in areas meant to target as many civilians as possible, and the timing of the strikes came during the most crowded rush hours in regular streets and local open-air markets.

It is well known that targeting crowded civilian areas is a war crime and a violation of international law, regardless of any arguments or justifications. However, the regime goes beyond even this, to a new egregious level where civilians in general are its particular target, and it seeks to take down the largest number of civilians in each raid.

Now, under the constant bombardment and with the increasing number of dead and maimed Syrians, it has become increasingly difficult even for ambulances and rescue teams to recover the wounded and the dead. This is especially true given the lack of resources in an area that has been besieged for more than three years, lacking even basic necessities for emergency and health services.

The brutal bombing this weekend of a popular market in Douma city, a rural suburb of Damascus, has resulted in the death of some 100 civilians and the wounding of 300 others. This new massacre is part of a bloody campaign carried out by the regime and Iranian forces around the Ghouta area near Damascus and in Idlib, which has claimed the lives of 450 civilians within the past week, most of them women and children.

Indiscriminate aerial attacks using conventional weapons are now responsible for over 60 per cent of all civilian deaths across the country. In areas such as Zabadani, aerial attacks are killing civilians en masse, razing civilian infrastructure to the ground and helping to perpetuate a policy of ethnic cleansing. The Syrian regime's indiscriminate aerial attacks can and must be stopped.

The time to take action to prevent Assad's aircraft from bombing is long overdue. The Security Council has at its disposal the tools to prevent these atrocities immediately. And in the absence of Security Council action, Member States themselves have both the tools and ample legal justification to take the necessary action.

We therefore urge you to call on the Council to convene urgently to address these strikes. As the National Coalition, we hold the Assad regime and the occupying Iranian forces responsible for these attacks. Everything must be done in order to punish those responsible and prevent the further loss of life and the

destruction in Syria. The people in these areas need more than words, sympathy and condemnations — they need action. And they need it now.

(*Signed*) Khaled **Khoja**
President
National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces